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The President's Daily Brief

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27 January 1969

(Afternoon)

~~*Top Secret*~~

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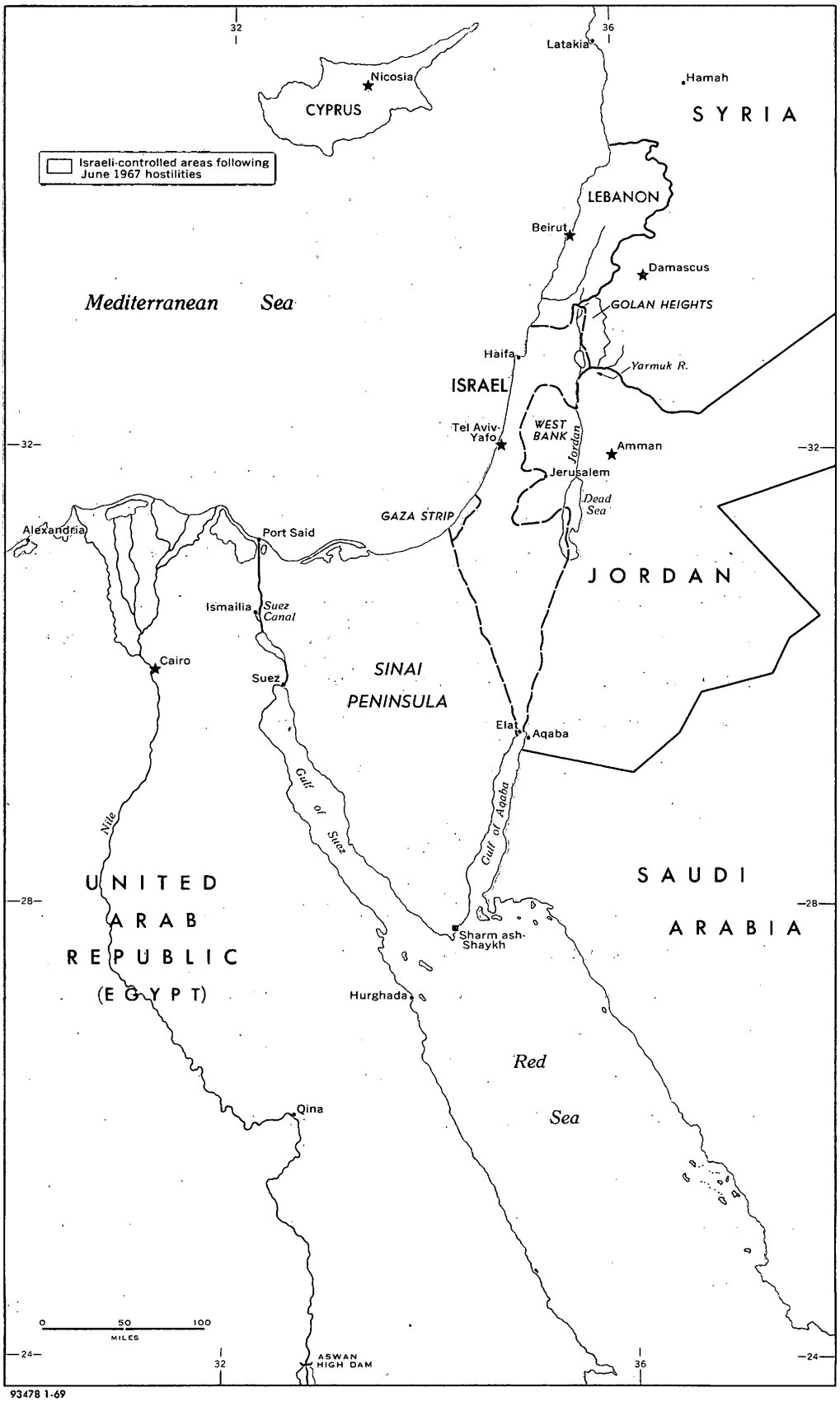

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I. MAJOR PROBLEMS

MIDDLE EAST

Baghdad radio has announced that 15 "Israeli spies," including nine Iraqi Jews, were hanged this morning. The embassy in Tel Aviv thinks the Israelis, however outraged, will find it hard to find a way to retaliate which would not further endanger the lives of the some 5,000 Jews in Iraq.

Prime Minister Eshkol's first reaction was to note in a speech before the Knesset today that the executions showed what fate would be in store for Jews if the Arab governments "could do as they pleased." The Israelis will certainly play on this theme of Arab treatment of subject Jewish minorities to parry Arab complaints about their refugee policies. They may also hit the some 20,000 Iraqi troops in Jordan especially hard if and when they carry out another retaliatory raid against Jordan.

EUROPE

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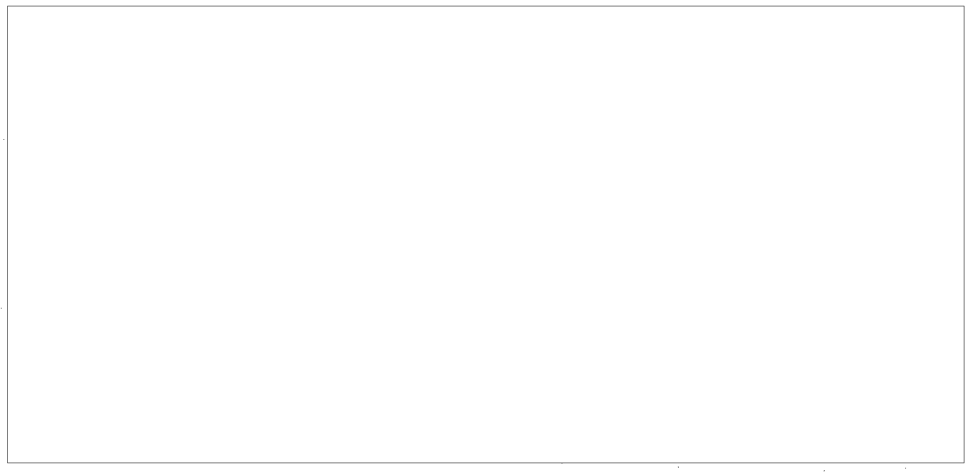

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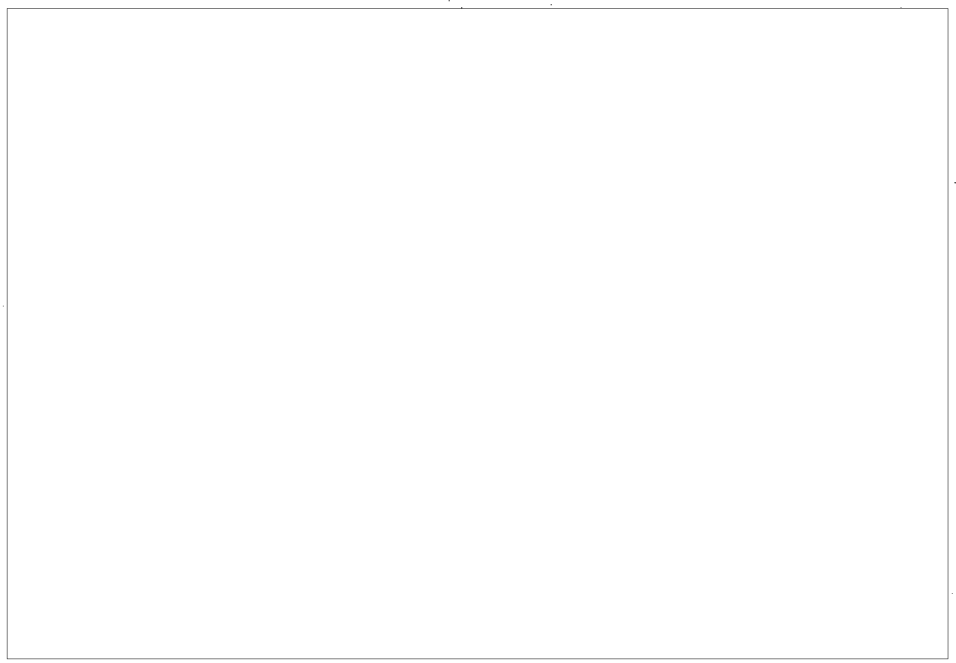
SOVIET AFFAIRS



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Seven Soviet TU-95 long-range bombers carried out reconnaissance flights against the west coast of Alaska on Saturday. None of the aircraft in this well-coordinated mission

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entered US airspace, but two of them approached to about 30 miles from the northwest coast of Alaska. These flights may signal the resumption of simulated strike missions against the northern coast of North America, similar to missions flown early last year by Soviet long-range aircraft.

* * *

Czechoslovakia has been quiet throughout the day.

VIETNAM

Communist presentations at Saturday's meeting provide no clues to Hanoi's negotiating tactics or the positions it eventually will take on substantive matters. The only "substance" in the Communist statements was in the repetition of broad propaganda statements which are intended to cover a wide range of negotiating procedures and which do not commit the Communists to any specific course. The DRV and Liberation Front rejection of the US proposal on the DMZ is only another indication that the Communists are not receptive to separate handling of military and political issues.

We cannot say how the Communists will attempt to get into substantive matters in Paris, but we think they are unlikely to show their cards in the formal sessions. Long before that happens, they will try to get some idea of what political arrangements the US is willing to consider for South Vietnam. We believe this is their major objective at this stage. They may simply wait for some US initiative but it seems likely they will also make some efforts in

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private or through third parties to find out which way the new US administration is headed. The French views about Hanoi's thinking [redacted] 50X1 are almost certainly based on recent conversations with North Vietnamese officials and may have been in part a reflection of such an approach.

* * *

There has been substantial movement during the last year in the climate of South Vietnamese opinion regarding negotiation with the National Liberation Front. Before the Tet offensive, most nationalists assumed that the NLF would eventually be destroyed. In April 1968, when the former peace candidate for the presidency, Truong Dinh Dzu, told newsmen that he favored talking to the Front, most nationalists felt that he richly deserved to be arrested. This strongly anti-Front climate was partly responsible for the dismissal of the government of Prime Minister Loc in May and for the quick adoption of a harder anti-Front line by Prime Minister Huong.

Since the initial shock that followed the 31 October announcement that the US would sit down with the NLF, Vietnamese nationalists have gradually come to accept the idea that some kind of a deal will have to be made with it. Although Ky's December remarks about dealing with the Front as a "reality" but not as an "entity" have never appeared in the Vietnamese press, they have been widely discussed without causing much adverse reaction.

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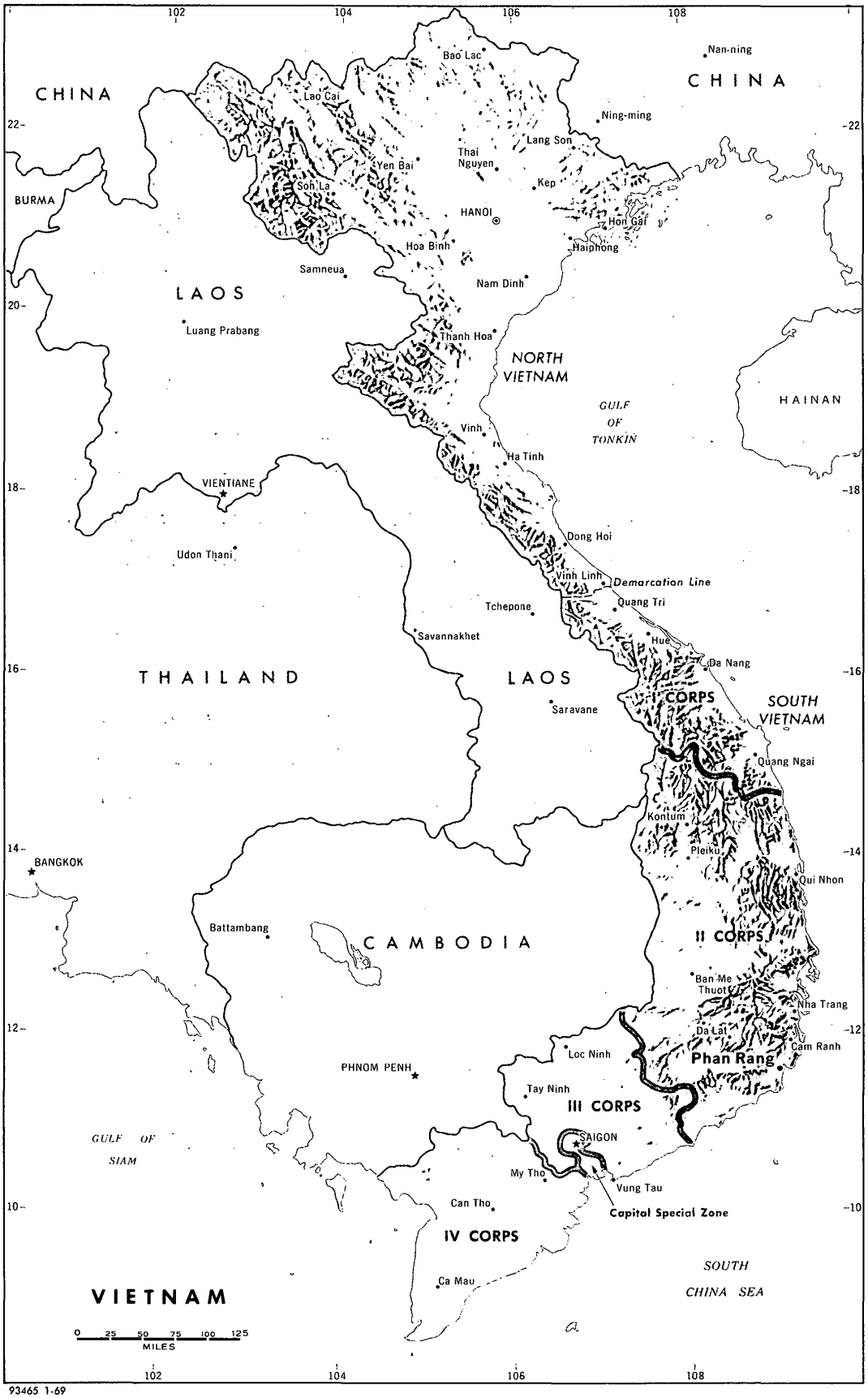

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So far, however, most thinking about how to accommodate the NLF involves schemes to convert it into a legal, non-Communist party. There is little evidence that the Saigon leadership or other nationalists have yet taken a very hard look at just how much they may be required to concede to the Front in order to get the North Vietnamese to agree to withdraw their troops from South Vietnam.

* * *

Enemy urban sapper squads were active again yesterday, hitting a police station in Phan Rang, a coastal provincial capital, with rocket grenades and automatic rifle fire. This closely followed an attack on the Phan Rang Airfield which destroyed two planes and damaged 27 others.

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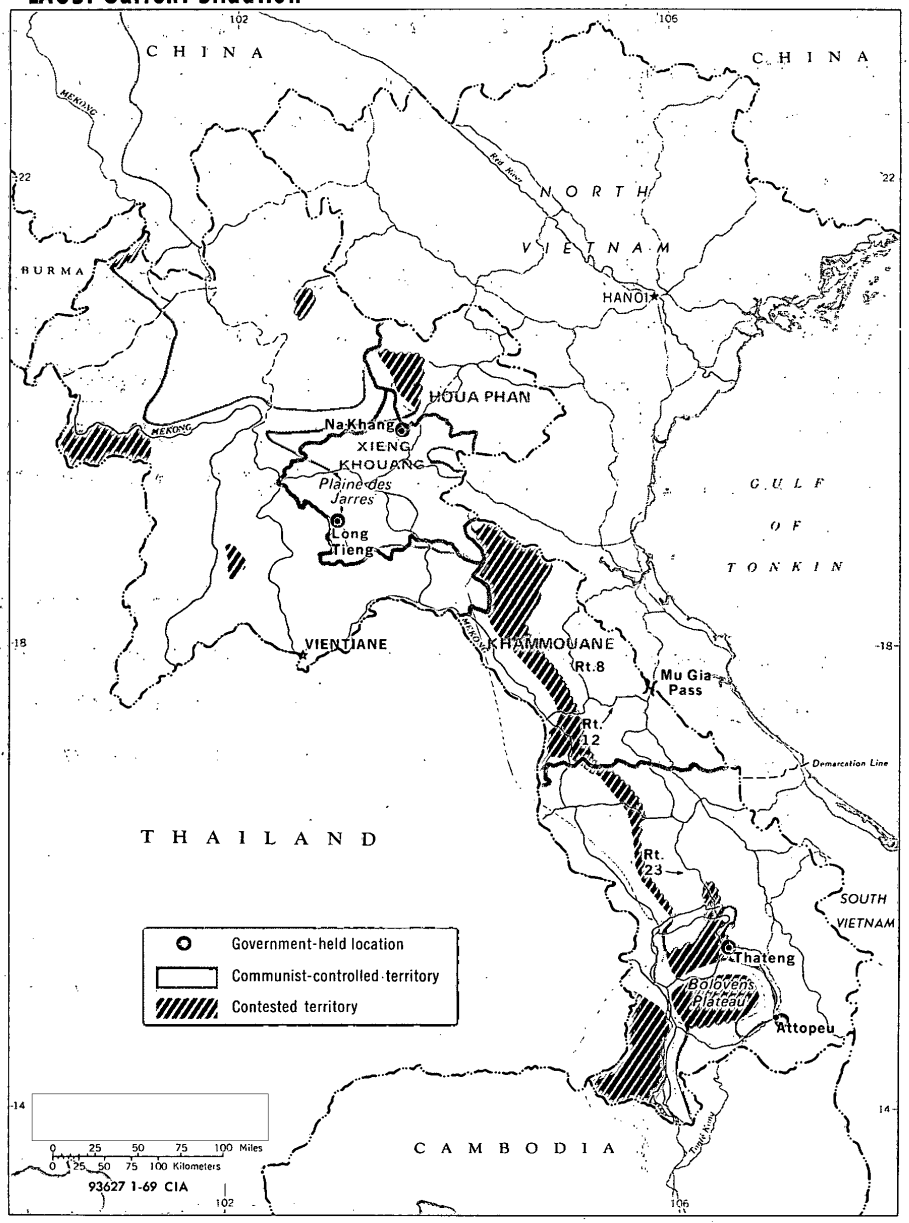
LAOS: Current Situation



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II. OTHER IMPORTANT DEVELOPMENTS

LAOS

In northern Laos, enemy probing activity has shifted from the government's guerrilla base at Na Khang to the outlying defensive positions protecting General Vang Pao's guerrilla headquarters at Long Tieng. Vang Pao is regional military commander and leader of the Meo tribe. The scope of recent enemy activity is not yet clear, but the loss of any of these government positions would further hamper efforts to support guerrilla operations in the northeast. Vang Pao has already been forced to withdraw three battalions from the defense of Na Khang to meet the threat to Long Tieng.

In the south, villagers continue to report large enemy troop movements, some accompanied by heavy weapons, toward Ban Thateng. A government counteroffensive to relieve enemy pressure along the eastern rim of the Bolovens Plateau has had trouble getting started.

JAPAN

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COMMUNIST CHINA

Mao Tse-tung and all his top aides attended a major rally in Peking on 25 January, their first collective public appearance in three and a half months. The turnout

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probably was intended to dispel widespread rumors in China about Mao's health and leadership changes. In fact, however, Peking's display of the leadership sheds no new light on the political infighting we believe is in progress.

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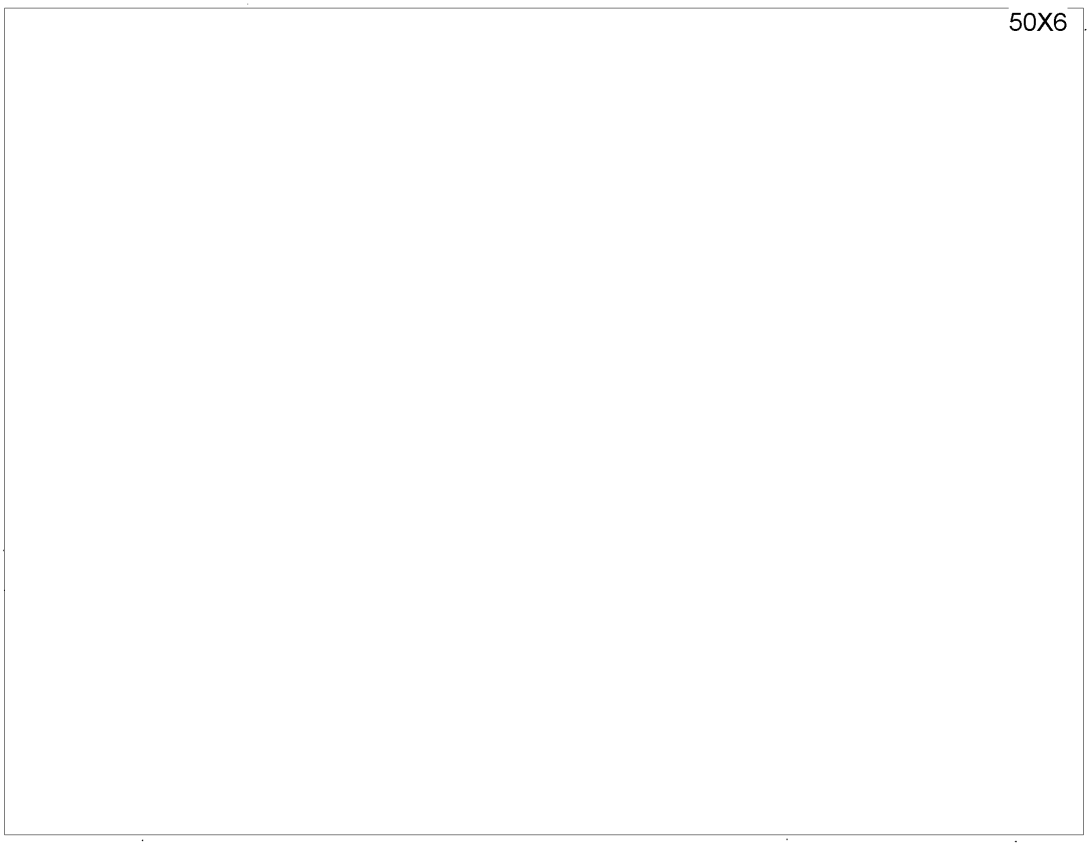

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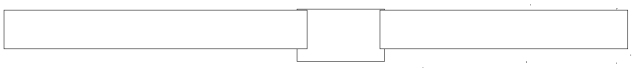

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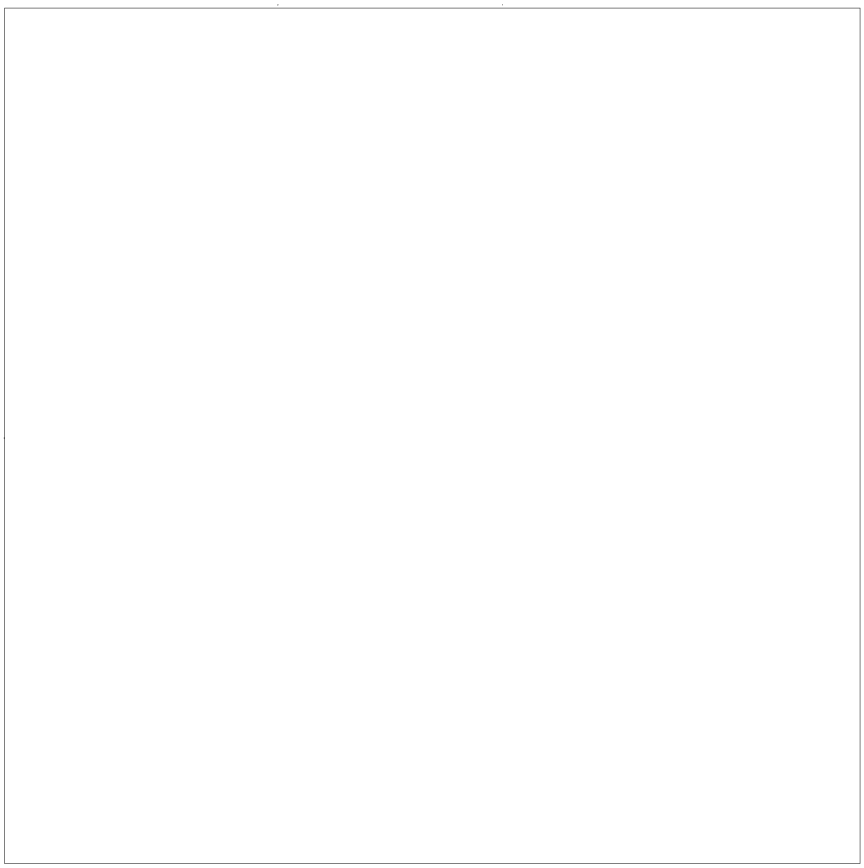

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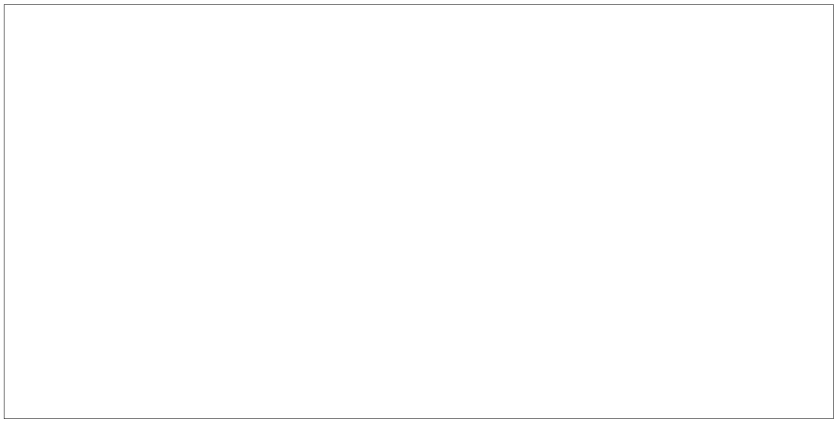

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ANNEX

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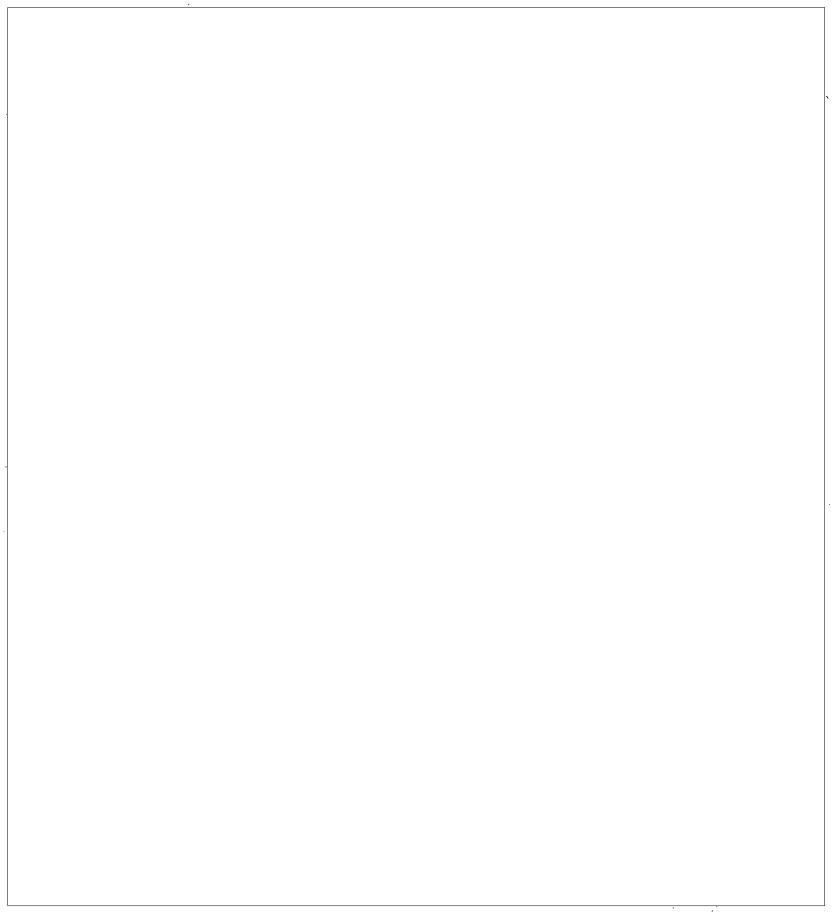

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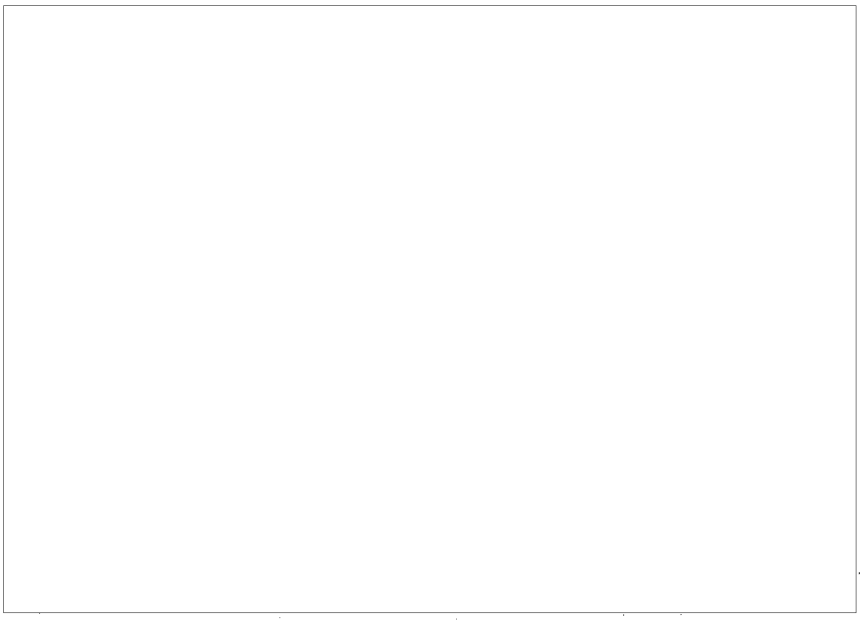

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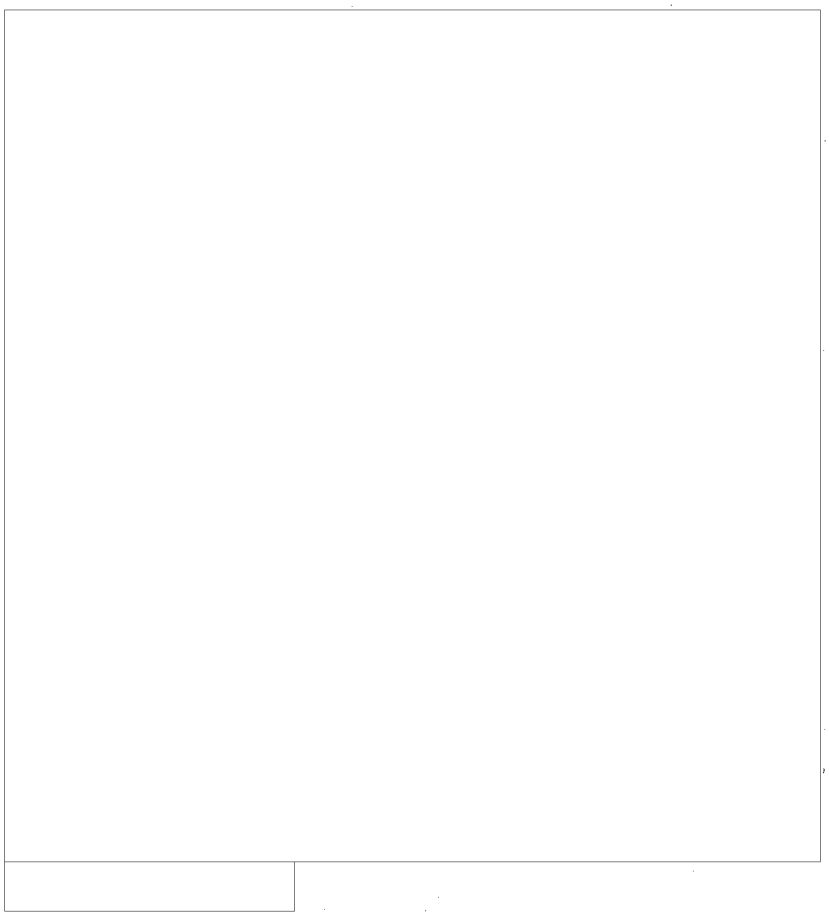

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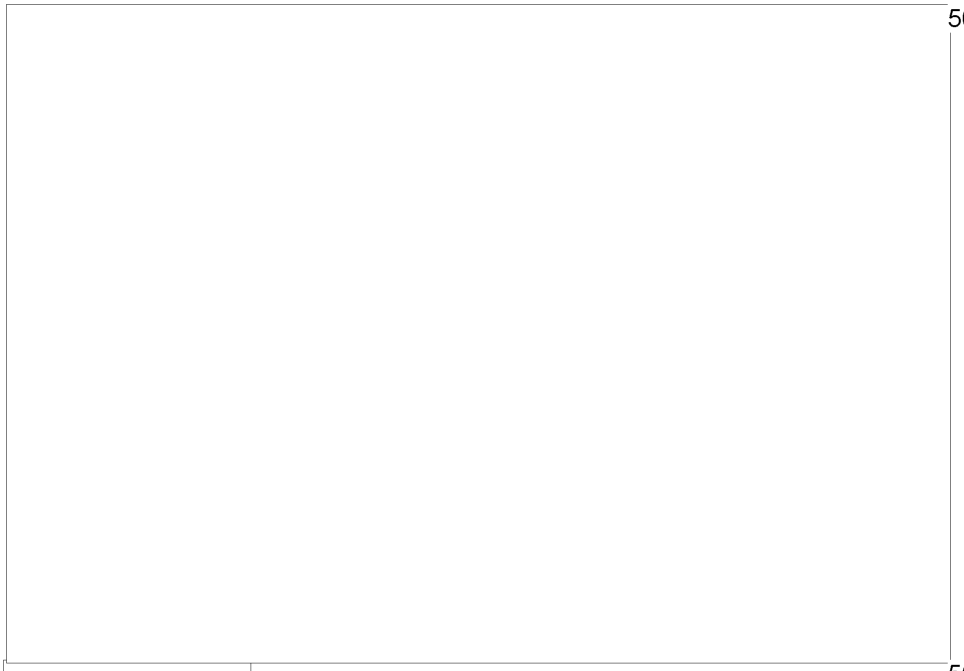

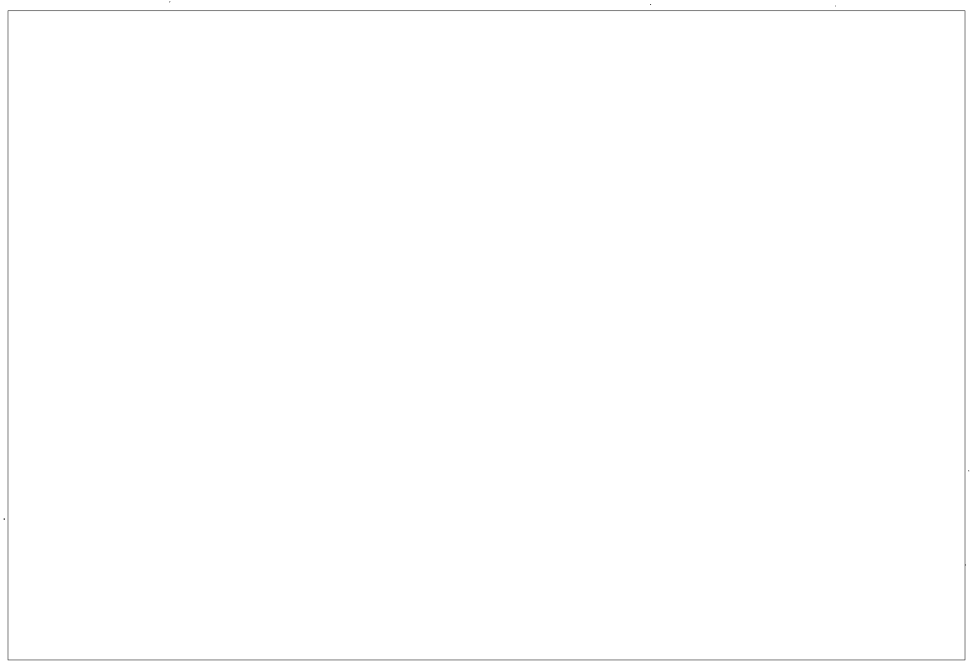

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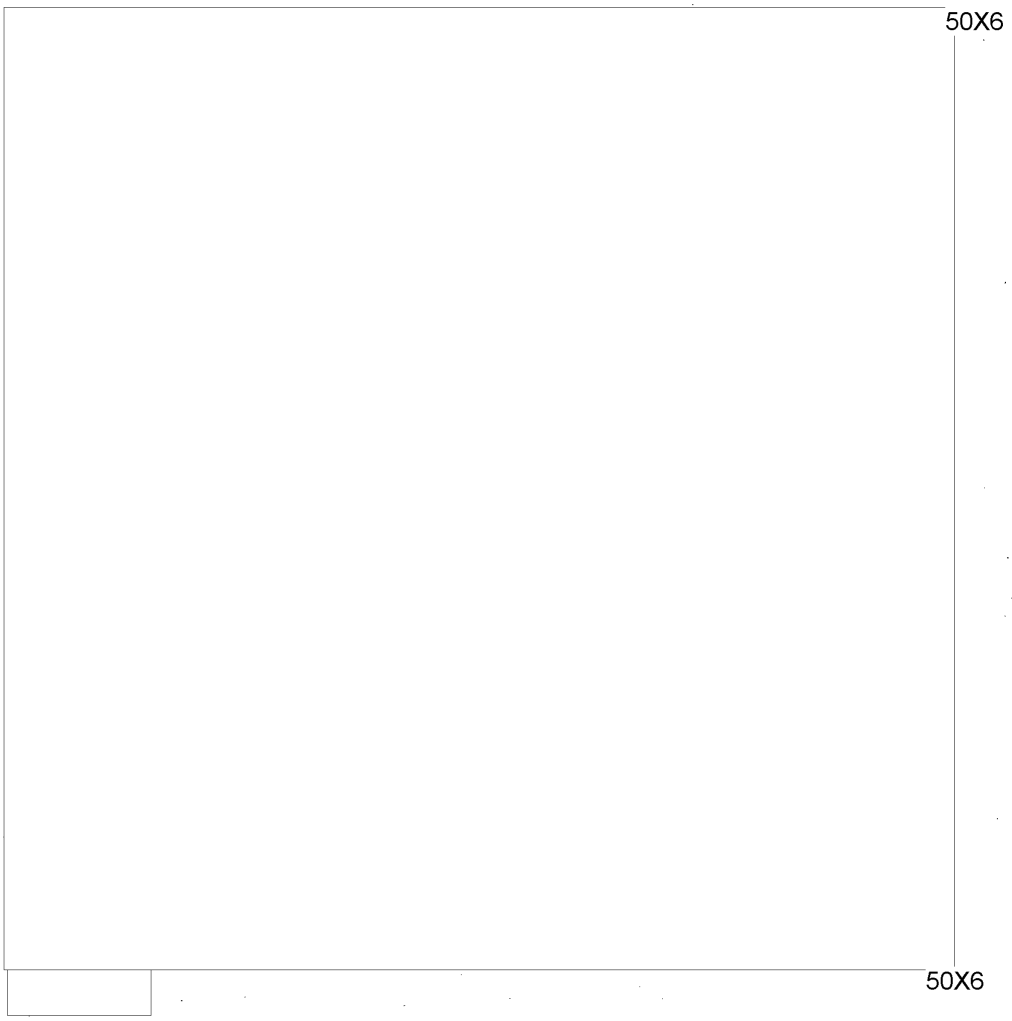

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